



An Introduction to Literature of English  
Reading, Explicating, & Responding Critically

# 英语 文学 概论

邓绪新 编著



全国优秀出版社  
武汉大学出版社

H319.4  
668

# **An Introduction to Literature of English**

**Reading, Explicating, & Responding Critically**

## **英语文学概论**

邓绪新 编著

**武汉大学出版社**

## 图书在版编目(CIP)数据

英语文学概论 = An Introduction to Literature of English/邓绪新  
编著. — 武汉: 武汉大学出版社, 2002. 7  
ISBN 7-307-03496-4

I. 英… II. 邓… III. 英语—文学—文学评论 IV. I106

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2002)第 008868 号

责任编辑: 黄朝昉 责任校对: 王 健 版式设计: 支 笛

---

出版发行: 武汉大学出版社 (430072 武昌 珞珈山)

(电子邮件: wdp4@whu.edu.cn 网址: www.wdp.whu.edu.cn)

印刷: 武汉大学出版社印刷总厂

开本: 850×1168 1/32 印张: 13.625 字数: 337 千字

版次: 2002 年 7 月第 1 版 2002 年 7 月第 1 次印刷

ISBN 7-307-03496-4/I·254 定价: 18.00 元

---

版权所有, 不得翻印; 凡购买我社的图书, 如有缺页、倒页、脱页等质量问题,  
请与当地图书销售部门联系调换。

---

# Preface

---

*Introduction to literature of English : Reading, Explicating, and Responding Critically* is a unique book . Not only of selected readings, the book is also a comprehensive guide to explicating and responding to literature. From my own experience of teaching literature, I have found that almost everybody who studies literature experiences the same problem: how to explicate and respond to the text. It is perfectly possible for students of English and of literature to read a story or a poem over and over again and yet still to feel baffled and at loss as to what to say about it. One way of solving this problem, of course, is to go to the library, look it up in some reference books and be ready to accept someone else's view of the text. But how much rewarding it would be if they could work out their own critical response to any work they choose or are required to study.

The aim of this book is to help them develop their critical skills by offering a variety of original texts, explaining some basic elements of literature, and providing some practical models and advice to read, understand, analyze and respond to literature critically. The mastery of this skill can teach them never to take for granted; it can also develop within their critical skills, incisive thinking, and a sense of judgement. Learning the complexities expressed in the brief form of a poem, for instance, can teach them to look for the details in simple things. Each chapter provides them with a major subject

and a clear method of study so that they can see how to set about tackling texts on their own. It also attempts to provide them with some broad ideas about the kind of texts they are likely to be studying and some ideas about how to think about literature. It then shows them how to apply these ideas in helping them construct their own analysis and interpretation.

The book is not an exhaustive one, and is not intended to the student a general coverage of major authors; rather, it is designed to expose them to the major literary genre—fiction, poetry and drama—and to some masters of language. The usual topics and terms of literary scholarship are discussed, such as plot, character, point of view, figurative language, symbolism, irony, form and style, and so forth. In addition, the book also pays some attention to representative, basic sub-genres (the sonnet and the tragedy, as examples) in order better to understand the demands of artistic form. My hope is that although this book is, on the whole, intended to serve a practical purpose, it may also enrich their enjoyment of literature by making them more confident readers, alert to the interest and pleasure to be derived from literary texts.

Xuxin Deng

2002. 1

---

# Contents

---

Preface .....	1
---------------	---

## Fiction

Chapter 1 Plot .....	1
Jakob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, <i>Godfather Death</i> .....	5
John Updike, <i>A &amp; P</i> .....	9
Anton Chekhov, <i>Misery</i> .....	19
Chapter 2 Point of View .....	27
Ernest Hemingway, <i>Cat in the Rain</i> .....	33
Edgar Allan Poe, <i>The Tell-Tale Heart</i> .....	38
Chapter 3 Character and Characterization .....	46
Katherine Anne Porter, <i>The Jilting of Granny</i> <i>Weatherall</i> .....	51
Edith Wharton, <i>Roman Fever</i> .....	64
Chapter 4 Setting .....	84
Kate Chopin, <i>The Storm</i> .....	88
John Steinbeck, <i>Chrysanthemums</i> .....	96
Chapter 5 Tone and Style .....	112

Kate Chopin, <i>The Story of an Hour</i> .....	117
Ernest Hemingway, <i>A Clean, Well-Lighted Place</i> .....	121
John Collier, <i>The Chaser</i> .....	128
<b>Chapter 6 Theme</b> .....	133
William Carlos Williams, <i>The Use of Force</i> .....	137
Alice Walker, <i>Everyday Use</i> .....	142
<b>Chapter 7 Symbol</b> .....	155
Langston Hughes, <i>On the Road</i> .....	158
William Faulkner, <i>A Rose for Emily</i> .....	165
Eudora Welty, <i>A Worn Path</i> .....	178

## Poetry

<b>Chapter 8 Reading a Poem</b> .....	191
Langston Hughes, <i>Harlem</i> .....	196
Robert Frost, "Out, Out —" .....	197
Robert Browning, <i>My Last Duchess</i> .....	200
Li-young Lee, <i>I Ask My Mother to Sing</i> .....	203
<b>Chapter 9 The Speaking Tone of Voice</b> .....	204
Countee Cullen, <i>For a Lady I Know</i> .....	210
Mitsuye Yamada, <i>To the Lady</i> .....	211
Lyn Lifshin, <i>My Mother and the Bed</i> .....	213
Walter De La Mare, <i>An Epitaph</i> .....	215
<b>Chapter 10 Figures of Speech</b> .....	216

Sylvia Plath, <i>Metaphors</i> .....	225
Alfred, Lord Tennyson, <i>The Eagle</i> .....	226
William Wordsworth, <i>London, 1802</i> .....	227
James Stephens, <i>The Wind</i> .....	228
N. Scott Momaday, <i>Simile</i> .....	228
Margaret Atwood, <i>You Fit Into Me</i> .....	229
William Shakespeare, <i>Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?</i> .....	229
Howard Moss, <i>Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?</i> .....	230
<b>Chapter 11 Imagery and Symbolism</b> .....	232
Ezra Pound, <i>In a Station of the Metro</i> .....	235
T. S. Eliot, <i>The Winter Evening Settles Down</i> .....	236
Wallace Stevens, <i>The Emperor of Ice-Cream</i> .....	237
Robert Frost, <i>The Road Not Taken</i> .....	238
T. S. Eliot, <i>The Boston Evening Transcript</i> .....	239
Sharon Olds, <i>Rites of Passage</i> .....	240
William Blake, <i>The Tyger</i> .....	241
<b>Chapter 12 Irony</b> .....	244
Daniel Halpern, <i>How to Eat Alone</i> .....	247
Edna St. Vincent Millay, <i>Love Is Not All ; It Is Not Meat nor Drink</i> .....	249
W. H. Auden, <i>The Unknown Citizen</i> .....	250
<b>Chapter 13 Sound</b> .....	253
Galway Kinnell, <i>Blackberry Eating</i> .....	260



T. S. Eliot, <i>Virginia</i> .....	261
A. E. Housman, <i>Eight O'Clock</i> .....	262
Robert Frost, <i>Desert Places</i> .....	262
<b>Chapter 14 Rhythm</b> .....	264
Thomas Hardy, <i>The Man He Killed</i> .....	269
Robert Frost, <i>Stopping by Woods on a         Snowy Evening</i> .....	270
<b>Chapter 15 Stanzaic Forms</b> .....	272
Dylan Thomas, <i>Do Not Go Gentle Into That         Good Night</i> .....	275
Michael Drayton, <i>Since There Is No Help, Come Let Us         Kiss and Part</i> .....	277
Elizabeth Barrett Browning, <i>Grief</i> .....	277
Edward Arlington Robinson, <i>Richard Cory</i> .....	278
<b>Chapter 16 Open Form</b> .....	280
Stephen Crane, <i>The Heart</i> .....	284
Wallace Stevens, <i>Thirteen Ways of Looking at a         Blackbird</i> .....	284

## **Drama**

<b>Chapter 17 The Elements of Drama</b> .....	289
Susan Glaspell, <i>Trifles</i> .....	297
<b>Chapter 18 Tragedy</b> .....	332

John Millington Synge, <i>Riders to the Sea</i> .....	334
<b>Chapter 19 Comedy</b> .....	354
Wendy Wasserstein, <i>The Man in a Case</i> .....	357

## **Critical Approaches to Literature**

Formalist (or New) Criticism .....	369
Marxist (or Sociological) Criticism .....	372
Structuralism .....	375
Post-structuralism .....	379
Deconstructionist Criticism .....	382
Psychoanalytical Criticism .....	384
Reader-Response Criticism .....	388
Feminist(Gender) Criticism .....	392
Mythic and Archetypal Criticism .....	395

## **Glossary of Literary Terms**

Fictional Terms .....	399
Poetic Terms .....	406
Dramatic Terms .....	419
Bibliography .....	422

---

# Fiction

---

## Chapter 1 Plot

Although an independent part of all fiction and drama, whether in prose or verse, plot is a concept about which there has been much disagreement. Aristotle called it “the first principle” and “the soul of a tragedy.” He called it “the imitation of an action” and also “the arrangement of the incidents.” The action imitated should be “a whole”—that is, it should have a beginning, a middle and an end. A plot, Aristotle maintained, should have unity, that is, imitating one whole action. He disliked episodic plots, “in which the acts succeed one another without probable or necessary sequence.”

E. M. Forster made a helpful distinction between **story** and plot. A story is “a narrative of events in their time-sequence. A **plot** is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality.” A story arouses only curiosity; a **plot** demands intelligence and memory. Thus plotting is the process of converting story into plot, of changing a chronological arrangement of incidents into a causal and inevitable arrangement. Thus functioning of some kind of intelligent overview of ACTION, which establishes principles of selection and relationship among EPISODES, make a plot. Clearly there must be

more than one episode, and equally clearly the relation among the episodes must be close. Out of the welter of experience, a selection of episodes is made that in itself constitutes a "whole" action.

Critics, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, have quarreled with Aristotle's assigning plot the chief place in a dramatic composition, and have insisted that CHARACTER and CHARACTERIZATION are more important, the plot being merely a "mechanical means" by which a STRUCTURE designed to display CHARACTERS is arranged. Based on their arguments, we might tentatively formulate a definition like this: **Plot** is an intellectual formulation about the relations among the incidents of a DRAMA or a NARRATIVE, for EPISODES do not in themselves make a plot, the plot lies in relations among episodes. To define plot as an intellectual formulation is to define it as formulation of incidents—CHARACTERS and ACTIONS—and how they relate.

Since the plot consists of CHARACTERS performing actions in incidents that comprise a "single, whole, and complete" ACTION, this relation involves CONFLICT between opposing forces. CONFLICT is the struggle that grows out of the interplay of the two opposing forces in a plot. CONFLICT provides interest, suspense, and tension. At least one of the opposing forces is usually a person, or, if an animal or an inanimate object, is treated as though it were a person. This person, usually the PROTAGONIST, may be involved in CONFLICTS of four different kinds: (1) a struggle against nature, as in Jack London's *"To Build a Fire"*; (2) a struggle against another person, usually the ANTAGONIST, as in Stevenson's *"Treasure Island"*; (3) a struggle against society, as in the novels of Dickens and George Eliot; or (4) the struggle against fate or des-

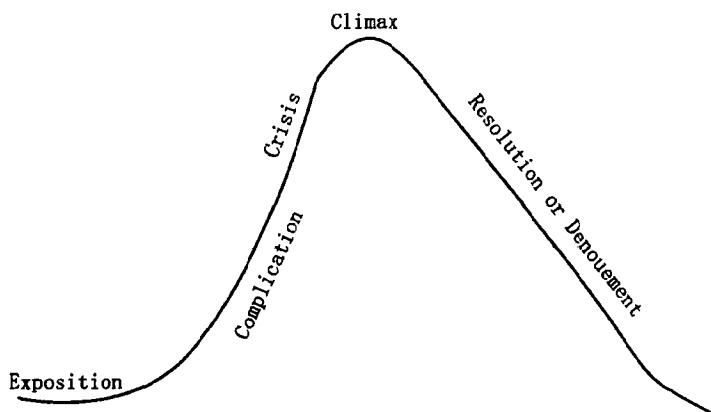
tiny. However, we seldom find a simple, single CONFLICT in a Plot, but rather a complex one involving two or more of the preceding elements. For example, the basic CONFLICT in Hamlet may be interpreted as a struggle within Hamlet himself, but it is certainly also a struggle against his uncle as ANTAGONIST and even a struggle against nature and destiny. Dreiser's "*Sister Carrie*" records a girl's struggle against society, as represented by the city, and yet it is also a struggle against her animal nature and even partly with herself. CONFLICT, in short, is the raw material out of which Plot is constructed. Without conflict, without composition, plot does not exist. This opposing force knits one incident to another and develops the struggle. This struggle between the forces, moreover, comes to a high tension in some one incident—the CRISIS; and then comes to the highest tension in that incident—the CLIMAX—that forms the turning point of the STORY. In this climactic EPISODE the RISING ACTION comes to an end and the FALLING ACTION begins; and as a result of this incident some DENOUEMENT or CATASTROPHE is bound to follow.

In brief, the **Plot** of a story usually has this structure:

1. **Exposition**—setting forth of the initial situation or setting the scene, including the introduction of the main characters and any other background information.
2. **Conflict**—a complication that moves to a climax.
3. **Denouement**—the outcome of the conflict or the resolution or "the untying of the knot".

This structure might be demonstrated as follows:

Let us look at the Grimm brothers' tale "*Godfather Death*". The tale has a beginning, a middle, and an end. It begins with an



EXPOSITION. The exposition is brief—all in the opening paragraph; the unfolding of a dramatic situation (a poor man with many children to feed), the introduction of the main characters (besides the poor man, we have God, Devil and Death) and some other background information that we need in order to understand and care about the events to follow. The middle section of the story begins with the second paragraph in which Death gives the herb to the boy and warns the boy not to defy him and ends with the fourth paragraph in which the doctor defies his godfather for a second time. This section is a COMPLICATION in which the son and not the father is to be central human character of the story (the son as the protagonist and the godfather as the antagonist). It provides some basic elements of the RISING ACTION before the action moves to the CLIMAX. The statement "But take care not to use the herb against my will or it could be the worst for you" (see the second paragraph) may serve both as a WARNING and a FORESHADOW.

ING. In the third paragraph, SUSPENSE is created among the readers (Will the doctor triumphs over Death? Does the doctor stand any chance against such a superman? What will be the outcome of his defiance?) When SUSPENSE goes, a CRISIS comes (The doctor defies his godfather for the first time) and at the end of this paragraph another WARNING or FORESHADOWING appears (“...but if you ever dare do such a thing again, you put your own head in the noose and it is you I shall carry away with me.”) In the fourth paragraph, another CRISIS is produced (The doctor cheats his godfather for a second time.) CLIMAX comes with the last paragraph, which is the moment of greatest tension at which the OUTCOME is to be decided and finally comes DENOUEMENT in which Death allows the little candle to go out and “the doctor sank to the ground and had himself fallen into the hands of death.” And the story ends with Death’s triumphing over the doctor.

***Jakob Grimm*** (1785—1863) and

***Wilhelm Grimm*** (1786—1859)

### **Godfather Death**

**Translated by Lore Segal**

A poor man had twelve children and worked night and day just to get enough bread for them to eat. Now when the thirteenth came into the world, he did not know what to do and in his misery ran out onto the great highway to ask the first person he met to be

godfather. The first to come along was God, and he already knew what it was that weighed on the man's mind and said, "Poor man, I pity you. I will hold your child at the font and I will look after it and make it happy upon earth." "Who are you?" asked the man. "I am God." "Then I don't want you for a godfather," the man said. "You give to the rich and let the poor go hungry." That was how the man talked because he did not understand how wisely God shares out wealth and poverty, and thus he turned from the Lord and walked on. Next came the Devil and said, "What is it you want? If you let me be godfather to your child, I will give him gold as much as he can use, and all the pleasures of the world besides." "Who are you?" asked the man. "I am the Devil." "Then I don't want you for a godfather," said the man. "You deceive and mislead mankind." He walked on and along came spindle-legged Death striding toward him and said, "Take me as godfather." The man asked, "Who are you?" "I am Death who makes all men equal." Said the man, "Then you're the one for me; you take rich and poor without distinction. You shall be godfather." Answered Death: "I will make your child rich and famous, because the one who has me for a friend shall want for nothing." The man said, "Next Sunday is the baptism. Be there in good time." Death appeared as he had promised and made a perfectly fine godfather.

When the boy was of age, the godfather walked in one day, told him to come along, and led him out into the woods. He showed him an herb which grew there and said, "This is your christening gift. I shall make you into a famous doctor. When you are called to a patient's bedside I will appear and if I stand at the sick man's head you can boldly say that you will cure him and if you give him some



of this herb he will recover. But if I stand at the sick man's feet, then he is mine, and you must say there is no help for him and no doctor on this earth could save him. But take care not to use the herb against my will or it could be the worse for you."

It wasn't long before the young man had become the most famous doctor in the whole world. "He looks at a patient and right away he knows how things stand, whether he will get better or if he's going to die." That is what they said about him, and from near and far the people came, took him to see the sick, and gave him so much money he became a rich man. Now it happened! that the king fell ill. The doctor was summoned to say if he was going to get well. When he came to the bed, there stood Death at the feet of the sick man, so that no herb on earth could have done him any good. If I could only just this once outwit Death! thought the doctor. He'll be annoyed, I know, but I am his godchild and he's sure to turn a blind eye. I'll take my chance. And so he lifted the sick man and laid him the other way around so that Death was standing at his head. Then he gave him some of the herb and the king began to feel better and was soon in perfect health. But Death came toward the doctor, his face dark and angry, threatened him with raised forefinger, and said, "You have tricked me. This time I will let it pass because you are my godchild, but if you ever dare do such a thing again, you put your own head in the noose and it is you I shall carry away with me."

Soon after that, the king's daughter lapsed into a deep illness. She was his only child, he wept day and night until his eyes failed him and he let it be known that whoever saved the princess from death should become her husband and inherit the crown. When the